

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 332 625

HE 024 588

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TITLE Assessing Assessment: An In-depth Status Report on the Higher Education Assessment Movement in 1990. The First Report of a National Survey. Higher Education Panel Report Number 79.  
INSTITUTION American Council on Education, Washington, D.C.; Winthrop Coll., Rock Hill, S.C.  
SPONS AGENCY South Carolina Commission on Higher Education, Columbia.  
PUB DATE May 91  
NOTE 36p.  
AVAILABLE FROM Division of Policy Analysis and Research, American Council on Education, One Dupont Circle, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036-1193 (1-10 copies: \$10.00 members, \$13.00 non-members; 11 or more copies: \$8.00 members, \$11.00 non-members. All orders must be prepaid).  
PUB TYPE Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160) -- Statistical Data (110) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS \*College Outcomes Assessment; \*College Students; \*Educational Assessment; \*Faculty; \*Higher Education; \*Self Evaluation (Groups)  
IDENTIFIERS \*Comprehensive Student Assessment Programs

## ABSTRACT

This study examined the prevalence and progression toward generally accepted goals of comprehensive student assessment programs (CSAP) using data from the Higher Education Panel's stratified sample of 455 colleges and universities, of which 357 responded for a usable response rate of nearly 80%. The data indicated that about one-third of the nation's 2,600 nonspecialized degree-granting institutions had CSAPs in 1990. Among findings were the following: most institutions view their administration as the major force behind assessment; most institutions are addressing a broad range of student learning and development areas; 40% of institutions have established an assessment office; nearly 70% of respondents reported faculty as "moderately" or "strongly" involved in assessment planning or implementation; assessment leaders come from diverse backgrounds; 62% of respondents reported no detrimental effects or said it was too soon to cite liabilities; problems in implementation were student motivation/participation, financial support, faculty motivation/participation, availability of valid assessment methods, and use of results for program enhancement. Conclusions offer a 9-step CSAP development model based on findings, suggest some unanswered questions, and predict that the next 2 to 5 years will be crucial to the assessment movement. Detailed statistical tables and a copy of the student assessment survey are attached. (JB)

# ASSESSING ASSESSMENT

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HIGHER EDUCATION PANEL REPORT NUMBER 79

MAY 1991

American Council on Education

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# **ASSESSING ASSESSMENT**

**An In-depth Status Report on the  
Higher Education Assessment Movement in 1990**

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Winthrop College**

**Charles J. Andersen and Elaine El-Khawas  
American Council on Education**

**The First Report of a National Survey by  
American Council on Education  
and  
Winthrop College**

**Higher Education Panel Report  
Number 79      May 1991**

**American Council on Education  
Washington, D.C. 20036**

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks go to Pat Hutchings and Ted Marchese of the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) for their advice and encouragement at every step of the way, and for the financial support their association contributed to the effort. Thanks are also extended to AAHE's Barbara Wright, who has directed its assessment forums. Her experience, counsel, and comments were very helpful in forming this report.

Thanks are also due to the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education for its financial support of the survey and to the Winthrop College administration for its ongoing support.

Warm thanks are extended to Boichi San and Rosa Lott-Hawkins of the ACE staff and to Vera Thomas of the Winthrop College Office of Assessment for their efficient and willing contributions to the survey.

Finally and most importantly, we are especially grateful to the Higher Education Panel representatives on campus and to the assessment program administrators who provided the information for this report.

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## SUMMARY

Student assessment in higher education has gained more and more attention since the publication of several national reports in the early 1980s that directed the nation's attention to how well students were being educated in the country's colleges and universities. In the last several years national conferences have been held on the issue and a variety of publications have appeared.

The American Council on Education's annual *Campus Trends* study has carried "assessment questions" since 1986. These have been, for the most part, general questions concerning any kind of assessment activity and planning. The special focus of this study is on "comprehensive" student assessment programs, and how they are progressing toward the goals most higher education assessment experts and mandates are advocating today. Institutions with such programs identified themselves by indicating that their assessment programs consisted of two or more major components including the assessment of basic college level skills, general education, major field of study, career preparation, and/or personal growth and development.

This publication presents data from the Higher Education Panel's sample indicating that about one-third of the nation's 2,600

nonspecialized degree-granting institutions had comprehensive student assessment programs (CSAPs) in 1990. The report not only presents some national "vital statistics" for these programs, but examines the extent to which certain issues are perceived as problems, indicates levels of faculty participation in the programs, and identifies unmet needs.

The findings do not always agree with frequently expressed ideas concerning student assessment. For example, less than 10 percent of the respondents considered (1) influence of outside agencies, or (2) the misuse of program results by outside agencies or the media to be "severe" problems. Regarding faculty participation, nearly half of the respondents reported faculty to have been heavily involved in the planning and designing of the assessment program, but twenty-five percent of the respondents identified greater faculty involvement as a major "unmet need."

The authors offer a nine-step development cycle that evolves into an assessment/report/feedback loop. Finally, while identifying issues and circumstances that both help and hinder assessment, they note that solutions to even the toughest questions will likely be found.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Thirty percent of the nation's 2- and 4-year colleges and universities reported operating comprehensive student assessment programs in academic year 1989-90. An additional 60 percent reported that they planned to establish such programs in the near future.
- Internal administrative decision -- not a requirement external to the colleges -- was most frequently cited as the reason for establishing such comprehensive student assessment programs.
- Multiple methods of assessment, most often including commercially and/or locally developed tests, are reported to be in place at most institutions with comprehensive student assessment programs.
- Seventy percent of the colleges with comprehensive student assessment programs reported faculty as "moderately" or "heavily" involved in planning and designing the program; less than half the institutions reported such a degree of faculty involvement in the direction or evaluation of the programs.
- Leaders of campus assessment efforts come from a wide variety of disciplines, although degrees in education, social sciences, and humanities are the most common. Frequently such leaders received their primary training in assessment through conferences and workshops.
- Very good or good ratings were given to the current assessment programs at almost half of the institutions surveyed.
- The problems related to assessment programs that appeared to be most severe in the minds of survey respondents were:
  - student motivation/participation
  - financial support
  - faculty motivation/participation
  - availability of valid assessment methods
  - use of results for program enhancement.
- Problems related to "outside interference" or misuse of assessment results by outside agencies appear to be more apparent than real, at least thus far.
- The most frequently cited helpful decision in establishing a comprehensive student assessment program was strong faculty involvement.
- The most frequently cited "unmet needs" for implementing successful assessment programs included:
  - more resources
  - better analysis and utilization of program results
  - better assessment methods
  - greater faculty involvement
  - better program planning and goal setting.
- A nine-step development cycle for comprehensive student assessment programs is identified that includes planning, implementation, and feedback phases.
- For the immediate future, the expansion of comprehensive student assessment programs seems assured.



## INTRODUCTION

For the nearly twenty years since pioneering colleges took their first concerted steps toward systematically evaluating the quality of their academic programs, the higher education assessment movement has been growing in breadth and impact to the status of a national and even international phenomenon. During that period, the assessment of institutional effectiveness has increasingly influenced not only college students, faculty, administrations, and curricula, but has also affected - and been affected by - accreditation agency standards and state executive and legislative education policies as well. And all indications point to assessment's continued growth as a major factor shaping the future of higher education.

Tracing the development of the assessment movement is difficult since, except in the cases of a few institutions, detailed information on its early period is lacking. But patterns of progress since the mid-1980's have been better documented, primarily through surveys by the American Council on Education (ACE) and the Education Commission of the States (ECS). We know, for example, that close to forty of the fifty states now actively promote higher education assessment - mostly through legislative or regulatory mandates - as compared to only three or four in 1985 (Finney, 1990); and that 82% of all colleges report having assessment activities underway today, up from 55% just two years ago (El Khawas, 1990 and 1988).

Results like these have been invaluable in outlining the general profile of the assessment movement, but what of the all important operational details? How many colleges and universities are actually implementing comprehensive assessment programs, as required by most mandates? What indicators of quality are they measuring? What assessment methods are they using? How are assessment programs organized? And what sorts of higher educators are leading campus efforts? What are the key pitfalls in assessment, and perhaps more to the heart of the matter, how are faculty and administrations dealing with such problems? In other words, specifically whom is doing specifically what in higher education assessment, and how is it going?

Now, for the first time, these and many other "nuts and bolts" questions have been posed to a stratified sample of 455 colleges and universities representative of over 2600 two- and four-year post-secondary institutions in the United States. With nearly an 80% usable response rate (357 schools; see the Technical Notes in Appendix B), this ACE-Winthrop survey constitutes the most thorough study of higher education assessment practices accomplished to date.\*

Prior to this report, anyone in need of a reasonably detailed overview of what was happening in the assessment movement faced a daunting quest. Although valuable information abounds in the literature, it is too widely dispersed and varied in quality to be easily located, digested, and/or utilized. There is no higher education assessment journal, only one national newsletter, and no "handbook" compendium of relevant models, methods and materials. (Helpful efforts in this direction have been made by the American Association for Higher Education's Assessment Forum, the federal Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education's Assessment Program Book, and the Assessment Resource Center at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, but much remains to be done.)

A few assessment information clearinghouses have sprung up, but they are overextended, understaffed, and generally unable to provide integrated pictures of assessment efforts across models, institutions and topics. More in-depth knowledge of particular assessment approaches can be obtained via reports or workshops from individual institutions with more advanced assessment programs, but finding comparative frames of reference is time consuming and difficult.

As another option, one might attend one or more assessment conferences where a broader mosaic of experiences from across the higher education spectrum are available. But while all attendees will find some of what they need to

\* Note: Additional support for this study was provided by South Carolina Commission on Higher Education and American Association for Higher Education grants to Winthrop College.

know, and a few will find much of what they need to know, most will leave the conference with their appetites for assessment information more whetted than satisfied.

This study is an attempt to help narrow this higher education assessment "information gap." As compared to other sources, this study was designed to provide more information on the inner workings of assessment programs, yet on a much broader scale. The survey included both forced-choice and open-ended items (see Survey Questionnaire in Appendix A) divided into three sections covering overall program status, program personnel and organization, and program evaluation, respectively. Institutions

## ASSESSMENT PROGRAM STATUS

According to our results, 30% of American colleges and universities report they are operating comprehensive student assessment programs (hereafter called CSAPs) as a primary indicator of institutional effectiveness. This much lower figure than those from the ACE Campus Trends and ECS surveys mentioned earlier may be explained by two major differences between this study and those. First, this survey specifically requested information on comprehensive assessment programs: i.e., efforts to measure undergraduate students' progress toward one to five categories of higher education objectives, usually in the arts and sciences. Institutions which would have responded affirmatively to other surveys on the basis of, for example, fledgling efforts or very limited assessment activities or primarily graduate-level measures, would likely respond in the negative here, thus lowering the percentage. A second important distinction of these results is that they address institutional-level assessment efforts rather than those at the state or program level, both of which would be expected to produce higher percentage responses. The percentage of states with at least one institutional assessment effort or the percentage of institutions with at least one program assessment effort (e.g., even a single survey, basic skills test, credentialing exam, etc.) would obviously be much higher than the percentage of only those institutions implementing more comprehensive assessment programs. This study, therefore, rather than conflicting with previous results, is more

with assessment programs in place were also asked detailed questions regarding the methods and strategies they are using, and the perceived strengths and weaknesses of their efforts thus far.

It is intended that the present summary, as well as more in-depth treatments to follow, will constitute a useful frame of reference against which institutional assessment efforts - models, methods, options or issues - can be compared. By so doing, we hope the present results will facilitate the development of more data-based, better quality higher education assessment programs in the future, which is our primary goal for this study.

complementary and elaborative, providing a better estimate of the numbers of broad institutional assessment programs that most assessment experts and mandates have been urging.

### The Overall Picture

There was remarkable consistency in general assessment activity across the institutions surveyed, with the type or category of institutions having little bearing on the likelihood of a campus CSAP. (See Technical Notes for institutional category distinctions.) As is indicated in Table 1, approximately equal percentages of baccalaureate institutions, comprehensive colleges, and universities reported having a comprehensive program to measure student progress toward the institution's educational and related student development goals. A slightly higher percentage (32%) of public colleges and universities than independents (28%) appear to have such programs in place.

Most institutions without an assessment program show a clear trend toward developing one. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of institutions who reported having no CSAP at the time of this survey have established specific timelines for program initiation and another 57% stated that assessment planning was underway although no implementation date had been set. This means that only 16% of institutions without a current program (approximately 11% of all institutions) report no current plans for comprehensive assessment.

This pattern of development from 1984, when less than 10% of all institutions surveyed reported having CSAPs, to 1990, when 89% report operational programs or plans for CSAPs, shows dramatic progress in the national trend to assess institutional effectiveness. These results are also in accord with the earlier mentioned ACE Campus Trends and ECS reports on the higher education movement's current status.

### **When and Why Were Assessment Programs Begun?\***

Of those campuses reporting CSAPs, 64% were begun within the past six years. While this time frame coincides with the spread of state government and regional accreditation assessment mandates, and such external pressures are commonly cited as a primary force behind higher education assessment, the reasons for CSAP initiation cited by institutions in our sample are considerably broader and more varied. (See Table 2.)

Among the top nine reasons given for establishing a CSAP, a decision by campus administration was cited most frequently (73%). Accreditation standards at 46% and state mandates (including legislative and executive policies) at 39% were cited by less than half of the sample. Other intra-institutional factors were also clearly prominent, with faculty initiatives (41%), following "national trends" (39%), and following other institutions' examples (20%) making up four of the top five reasons cited for beginning assessment programs. In the widely discussed matter of external versus internal incentives for assessment, internal factors appear to be as important, if not more important, than external pressures. The typical pattern portrayed in this study is that of institutional leaders becoming cognizant of assessment efforts on other campuses across the country and rallying the faculty to initiate their own local program, whether they are under an assessment mandate or not.

### **What Is Being Assessed...And How?**

The advice of experts in higher education assessment has strongly emphasized the need for

program models and methods tailored to the unique needs and characteristics of each institution. Yet, common institutional program objectives would suggest that common assessment components might be included in the efforts of most colleges and universities. To explore this question we divided institutional objectives into five categories (see Table 3), and asked institutions in the sample to indicate which components were included in their CSAP.

Additionally, one of the most important objectives of this study was to find out what measurement methods were being relied on for student assessment. Are "off the shelf" commercial tests and surveys dominating the CSAP scene? How willing are faculty to devote the time and effort needed to develop "local" instruments? Have more competency-based "performance measures" made significant inroads? To what extent are available student records being used? In other words, we were very interested in learning just how institutions are measuring what they're measuring. (See Table 4.)

The student learning and development objectives most frequently cited as a component of campus assessment programs was basic college-readiness skills. This component - defined as measuring student progress in such entry-level areas as reading, writing, and mathematics - was listed by 94% of institutions with assessment programs. Among these institutions, commercial tests were the most frequently cited method for assessing basic college readiness, with 82% reporting their use. Locally developed tests were utilized by approximately half of respondents who evaluate college readiness in their program, followed in frequency by available archival records (27%), performance-based methods (16%), and student self-reporting (10%). The frequencies with which all individual methods were reported suggest that multiple methods of assessing this area are being used by many institutions.

The second most frequently reported assessment program component was career preparation/alumni follow-up, which was cited by 76% of schools with CSAPs. Self-report was clearly the "method of choice" for assessing career development and following-up with alumni, with no other method being used by over 20% of the sample.

The assessment of general education/liberal studies was reported as a

\*Note: From this point on, percentage responses and operational details refer to the 30% of institutions surveyed who report having CSAPs already in place as of 1990. (A few percentage totals may not equal exactly 100% due to rounding.)



component of the assessment programs of 67% of responding institutions. Commercial tests were again the most frequently cited measurement method, with about four in ten institutions reporting their use. Performance-based methods were second in frequency of use at 24%, followed by locally developed tests (15% of institutions), student self-reporting (14%) and available archival records (14%).

Approximately two-thirds of colleges and universities stated that major fields were being assessed in their CSAPs. Locally-developed tests and performance-based methods were more likely to be included in assessing major specialty areas than in any other program component, with 39% and 38%, respectively, of all institutions reporting their use. Commercial tests, used by 27% of the sample, were the next most frequently reported method of assessing majors, followed by available archival records (17%), and student self-reporting (12%). Again, these data suggest that multiple methods are being widely used to assess major fields in

institutions, but it is not known to what extent multiple measures are typical within individual major departments.

The last assessment component reported by a majority of respondents (65%) was the assessment of students' personal growth and development. This area was defined as "measuring values, attitudes, social development and/or other nonacademic changes attributable to the college experience." Commercial instruments were the most frequently reported method of assessment in this area (reported by 29% of institutions), followed closely by student self-reporting at 24%.

Taken as a whole, it is clear that a wide range of institutional objectives measured by a variety of methods are typical of the CSAPs in this study. And while traditional strategies like commercial tests, surveys, and student records are prominent, more innovative options such as locally developed instruments, performance appraisal, and qualitative student reports are also playing important roles.

## **ASSESSMENT PROGRAM ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL**

### **CSAP Structure**

The organizational structure of any program, including a CSAP, is an important determinant of its long term stability and success. Furthermore, the administrative division to which a CSAP is assigned makes a strong statement about how assessment's role in higher education is actually perceived on that campus.

At this point assessment is apparently being seen as a primarily educational endeavor, with a clear majority of surveyed institutions (59%) giving an academic officer (i.e., vice president or dean of academic affairs) executive responsibility for their CSAP. Thirteen percent have put CSAPs in student affairs, 7% fall under institutional research, and 5% have added assessment leadership to the chief executive officer's duties. The remaining 17% have assigned their CSAPs elsewhere (14%) or are undecided/made no response (3%). (See Table 5).

Many key decisions and actions which ultimately determine assessment's success in enhancing the quality of institutional programs are also made by the individual(s) on the front lines charged with the day-to-day operations of

CSAPs. We now briefly review who these "assessment coordinators" are - regardless of specific title - and how their efforts are being organized.

As Table 6 shows, a majority of all institutions (62%) have put administrators in charge of ongoing program direction, as well as executive oversight duties, for their assessment efforts. Overall, only 20% have faculty member(s) coordinating CSAPs, 10% put operational responsibilities in the hands of a faculty committee, and 6% say "others" coordinate their CSAP, presumably referring to staff in student affairs and/or institutional research.

A large minority of institutions with CSAPs (40%) have created an on-campus assessment coordinating office. The majority of those institutions report that such offices perform the following services: Consultation with faculty (83%), CSAP coordination (81%), hands-on assessment implementation (79%), consultation with administrators (72%), liaison with students (65%), planning (65%), research and development (58%), and technical assistance (53%). Budgeting (46%) and assessment

program evaluation (38%) were also frequently cited assessment office functions.

In addition to such student assessment coordinating centers, 85% of institutions with CSAPs report other assessment support structures, including faculty councils/committees (69%) and/or administrative councils/committees (40%). Only 8% of all institutions report using assessment consultants, and only 3% of institutions with CSAPs directly involve student councils/committees in their operational structure.

### **Faculty Roles in Assessment**

Most experts strongly advocate high faculty involvement in CSAPs to prevent higher education assessment from becoming - in appearance or in fact - merely an administrative function or an exercise in external accountability. Thus, we made a point in this study to examine the roles being played by faculty members in CSAPs. (See Table 7.) Thus far, faculty appear most prominently in the planning and designing of CSAPs, with 45% of institutions reporting faculty as "heavily involved" and another 50% citing slight to moderate faculty involvement in that program phase. In terms of directing or coordinating CSAPs, most institutions see that as an administrative role, with only 19% reporting heavy faculty involvement and 68% slight to moderate. Faculty participation increases again in CSAP operation and implementation, with 34% heavily involved and another 53% at least somewhat involved; but faculty play less of a role in CSAP program evaluation with only 21% heavily involved, and 9% of institutions reporting no faculty role at all. While it is clear that at least some faculty input is common in almost all phases of CSAP activities, it does appear that the higher the level of assessment decision-making (i.e., direction and evaluation), the lower the level of faculty involvement.

Finally, in another example of conventional higher education wisdom apparently not being taken to heart in most CSAPs, only 10% of the institutions sampled reported being members of an assessment consortium.

### **Assessment Leaders: A Profile**

Higher educators who have reviewed the assessment literature or attended conferences or institutional workshops have observed an

extraordinary diversity in the backgrounds of leading experts in the higher education assessment movement, and this seems to be true at both the national and institutional level. Yet the present survey is the first known effort to systematically study the assessment-related backgrounds of a vital group of such leaders; i.e., those responsible for campus CSAPs.

Since CSAPs are relatively new programs, with no traditionally dominant disciplinary qualifications associated with leadership positions, we asked respondents to identify the individual leader "most involved with your campus assessment program." We then posed questions regarding that leader's academic discipline, degree level, position title, provenance, and assessment-related training and experience. In fact, we asked for the same information on the two most involved CSAP leaders to better encompass situations where assessment responsibilities are split or layered among more than one individual.

The expected diversity is, in fact, evident in reported CSAP leaders' backgrounds (see Table 8), with at least one percent of the sample utilizing at least one coordinator from each of six broad discipline categories. Overall, institutional assessment leaders are most likely to come from three disciplinary backgrounds: education (29%), social and behavioral sciences (25%), and arts and humanities (21%). The secondary CSAP leader profile is very similar, with only one other area (physical sciences/engineering/math at 7% for Leader #1 and 12% for Leader #2) accounting for 5% or more of the total.

There is considerable agreement among respondents that CSAP leaders are doctoral-level personnel (59% for Leader #1, 57% for #2), with only 2-year institutions using significant numbers of master's degree people, and less than 1% reporting CSAPs headed by bachelor's-level individuals. There is even more unanimity that assessment leaders for CSAPs are chosen from within the institution (86% for both Leaders #1 and #2) as opposed to bringing someone in from another college or other outside source.

Surprisingly, when we inquired regarding the specific training and experience of CSAP leaders, only 16% reported having taken a degree program with an emphasis on assessment, and 4% reported no prior training or experience with assessment whatsoever. By far

the most common training experience reported by CSAP leaders was attending workshops or seminars (73%), with a degree in education or higher education (47%), and experience in assessment at the disciplinary program level

(40%) or institutional level (20%), also being often reported as primary higher education assessment qualifications. A large number of institutions (45%) also cited other kinds of relevant experiences as important.

## ASSESSMENT PROGRAM EVALUATION

Evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of CSAPs should be a high priority as the higher education assessment movement progresses toward maturity. But, with the exception of the "first and second waves" of pioneer institutions in the 70's and early 80's, most colleges and universities are at much too early a stage of development to draw valid conclusions regarding the outcomes of their CSAPs. Thus, since product evaluation was unlikely to produce very meaningful results, this study focused on information regarding the process of assessment; what did respondents think was going right, what was going wrong, and what were they doing about both?

### Current Assessment Challenges and Steps Toward Resolution

Institutions in the survey were provided a list of eleven potential challenges or problems related to implementation of a successful student assessment program and were asked to rate each on a five point scale from "no problem" to "very severe problem." They then were asked to identify the two most severe challenges. Respondents were also asked to list the two "most helpful" decisions they made in establishing their assessment program. Decisions identified as being "most helpful" were categorized to facilitate analysis, interpretation, and reporting. Problem rating totals are shown in Table 9.

Considering all degrees of challenges together for the moment, a majority of all institutions identified the following as at least some problem: the availability of valid assessment methods and student motivation/participation (both 79%) tied for the most frequently cited problem, with coordination of all aspects of the CSAP (77%) and financial support for the CSAP (75%) closely following. Other widely reported problem areas were faculty motivation/participation (70%), using CSAP results for institutional program enhancement (69%), and analyzing CSAP

results (67%). No other problem was cited by over half of the sample.

When severity of problems is taken into account a slightly reordered pattern emerges. The number of problem areas rated as severe or very severe drops off dramatically and is headed by inadequate financial support (20%), availability of valid assessment methods (19%), student motivation/participation (14%), CSAP coordination (13%), and both faculty motivation/participation and using CSAP results for program improvement (at 11%). A similar hierarchy was formed from responses to an open-ended question asking which two challenges were most severe. (See Table 10.) Significantly, over one-third of the sample did not identify any of the problem areas as "most severe."

It is also of note that four widely assumed higher education assessment challenges were not seen as significant problems by our sample. In fact, at least half of the respondents reported them as "no problem" at all. These include administrative support (68%), misuse of results by the media or public (58%) or by regulating or accrediting agencies (55%), and undue influence on CSAPs by outside agencies (50%).

Thus, the survey found little, if any, support for the concern of some in higher education that assessment programs and their results are a vehicle for undue influence from outside agencies or an invitation for misuse of results by media, government, or other outside parties. Two percent (2%) or less of responding institutions cited any of these problems as "severe," although many colleges and universities may be at such early stages of the assessment process that potential problems regarding results and their interpretation and dissemination have not yet manifested themselves.

In terms of how CSAP leaders are trying to resolve these and other assessment challenges, we asked an open-ended question



regarding what decisions or actions taken by respondents they considered most helpful in setting up their programs. While a disappointing - or perhaps revealing - number of respondents (29%) gave no response, the following "best decisions" were cited by a significant percentage: getting faculty involved (23%), integrating CSAPs with institutional planning (19%), careful analysis and feedback of results (15%), a determined commitment to and prompt implementation of the CSAP (14%), increased allocation of resources (12%), and local development of assessment methods (11%). Somewhat surprisingly, only 5% listed making local as opposed to externally mandated decisions concerning the program as one of their best moves.

Nearly one in four institutions cited a decision "most helpful" to assessment implementation that could not be classified into one of the major categories cited above. These decisions included such ideas as having ample time to plan and implement assessment, seeking student support, maintaining flexibility in each discipline's assessment program, obtaining assistance from consultants, and staffing an office specifically for assessment. The variety of decisions/suggestions received in response to this survey suggests a substantial degree of creative problem-solving at work in higher education assessment, as well as a need for approaches that are geared to the unique problems and characteristics of individual institutions.

### **Perceived Benefits and Liabilities of Assessment**

With due caution regarding the previously noted fact that most CSAPs are in such a relatively early stage of development that respondents may be in a poor position to make retrospective judgments regarding their programs' ultimate worth, we next solicited open-ended comments on what the main beneficial and detrimental effects of assessment had been to date. Responses were then classified into the categories listed in Tables 11 and 12, which contain the percentages of institutions citing particular positive or negative effects.

Again, a significant number (26%) indicated that it was too soon to respond, but 30% felt academic program planning had been enhanced, 29% saw assessment feedback

improving students' efforts, and 3-10% said their CSAPs had increased their administration's cooperation and involvement in programs, upgraded standards, and improved faculty cooperation and morale.

Regarding possible detrimental effects of CSAPs (Table 12) no single problem was cited by more than 9% of the respondents, a truly encouraging finding. Between 4-9% of respondents said assessment had produced or exacerbated the following problems: extra work for faculty and administration, increased drain on resources, "turf" problems, and declines in morale. Of particular note is the fact that 53% of the sample institutions listed nothing in the "main detrimental effects" blanks, and 9% wrote in "no detrimental effects." With 62% of surveyed institutions citing no detrimental effects and only 26% reporting no present indications of beneficial effects, it seems safe to say that our sample sees CSAPs as "more worth than they're trouble."

### **Current Unmet Needs and Assessment Program Evaluation**

The last open-ended survey item asked respondents to list their three greatest unmet needs in implementing successful CSAPs and utilizing the results for educational program enhancement. Again aggregating first, second, and third responses for all institutions, the most frequently cited needs were: more resources (42%), better analysis and utilization of CSAP results (33%), better assessment methods (28%), greater faculty involvement (28%), better CSAP planning and goal setting (28%), and "other" types of needs (15%). Relatively few respondents said that greater administrative interest (11%) or greater student interest (8%) were significant unmet needs, and 19% did not respond to this item.

Finally - and again noting the interim nature of such judgments - we asked how respondents would rate the quality of their current CSAP. Only 9% said excellent, 49% said good or very good, 27% said only fair to poor, and 16% had no basis to judge or gave no response. Considering the scope of the challenges posed by higher education assessment under the best of circumstances - much less the difficult economic times many institutions have faced in the past few years - for over half of our respondents to rate their CSAP programs as good to excellent is taken as a very

optimistic indicator of assessment's future development as a positive force in the

improvement of higher education.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### Summary

This first in-depth study of the higher education assessment movement's status, on a representative stratified sample of campuses across the country, portrays a vibrant, growing phenomenon already having significant effects on academic programs. While other national studies have reported as many as 82% of colleges and universities having some assessment activities underway, our criteria for a comprehensive student assessment program (CSAP) - which are much closer, not incidentally, to the assessment recommendations of most experts as well as state and accreditation mandates - produced a much lower prevalence of 30%. Still, we found that the number of schools either currently operating a CSAP or planning to do so in the near future stands at an impressive 89%.

The impetus for assessment is seen by institutional representatives as being as much internally as externally based, if not more so. Despite the existence of higher education assessment mandates in close to forty states (and in 60% of the public institutions in our sample), a considerably higher percentage of institutions view their college or university administration as the major force behind assessment. Internal administrative decisions followed by accreditation standards, state mandates, and faculty initiatives, were the most frequently reported reasons for having begun a CSAP.

The large majority of institutions with comprehensive assessment programs are addressing a broad range of student learning and development areas including entry-level basic skills, general education, major fields, alumni follow-up/career development, and personal growth and development. Multiple methods of assessment, most often including commercial and locally developed instruments, also are reported to be in place at most schools. A multi-method approach is apparently more likely to be utilized for assessing basic college readiness (i.e., reading, writing, quantitative skills) and major fields of study than other assessment components. More innovative methods are also utilized by a significant minority of CSAPs.

The importance of assessment is attested to by the fact that 40% of colleges and universities have established a coordinating center (i.e., an "assessment office,") specifically designed to address this area. Most of these centers, as well as assessment programs in general, are run on a day-to-day basis by an administrator who usually reports to the chief academic officer or vice-president for academic affairs. Faculty groups such as academic councils are the most likely assessment support unit related to the CSAP on most campuses. Nearly 70% of our respondents reported faculty as "moderately" or "strongly" involved in assessment planning and implementation, with considerably less faculty involvement reported for important program supervision and evaluation functions. Most also reported no student involvement in CSAP development whatsoever. Thus, there is an opportunity and, if the advice of many assessment experts is followed, a substantial need for more faculty and student participation in CSAP operations on most campuses.

The perception of many observers and participants of the higher education assessment movement is that assessment leaders tend to come from remarkably diverse backgrounds. This hypothesis was supported by the data from the present study. Leaders of campus assessment efforts come from a wide variety of disciplines, although degrees in education, social sciences, and humanities are most common. Another perception, that a little experience and a few workshops or conferences can lead to one becoming viewed as an assessment "expert," was also borne out by our data. Although most assessment leaders possess terminal degrees, their credentials seldom include either formal education related to assessment or measurement, or significant prior experience in assessment. More than likely, such leaders have received their primary or sole training through conferences and workshops. This fact serves to emphasize the critical role of events such as the American Association for Higher Education's annual conference on assessment in higher education, state and regional meetings, and on-



campus workshops, as important means of sharing much needed expertise.

At this point in time, institutional representatives are considerably more likely to cite beneficial effects than detriments of assessment, with 62% reporting no detrimental effects at all or saying it was too soon to cite any liabilities. The enhancement of academic planning and of student efforts and feedback appear to be the most clearly recognized benefits of comprehensive assessment programs. The most frequently mentioned detriment, although cited by less than 10% of the sample, is the extra work for faculty and administrators that assessment programs tend to demand.

The implementation of a successful CSAP presents many challenges for institutions and for administrators and faculty charged with being "assessment leaders." Those problems which appear to be most severe in the minds of the institutional representatives completing our survey are student motivation/participation, financial support, faculty motivation/participation, availability of valid assessment methods, and use of results for program enhancement. Yet, these problems do not appear to be considered major impediments to the assessment efforts of most institutions. Additionally, problems related to "outside interference" or misuse of assessment results by outside agencies appear to be more apparent than real, at least thus far (a finding we'd like to see replicated in future surveys.)

Despite the earlier mentioned relatively attenuated on faculty roles in CSAPs, strong faculty involvement in assessment was the most frequently cited helpful decision in establishing a comprehensive assessment program. Additionally, the variety of other successful resolutions and decisions given by institutions support the strong need for opportunities to share ideas and creative solutions to the complex issues raised by higher education assessment activities.

Opportunities for sharing resources may also need to be pursued more rigorously by institutions in the future. (The need for more resources was the most frequently cited unmet need in our survey.) One way in which resources can be shared among institutions is through assessment networks, but thus far only 10% of colleges and universities report belonging to such a consortium. Analysis and feedback of results, better assessment

instruments, greater faculty involvement, and better planning and goal setting are a few of the other unmet needs which institutions face as they strive to implement effective CSAPs.

### **A Developmental Pattern of Assessment Programs?**

While this study includes a wide variety of CSAP origins, organizations, operations, and issues, present response trends and case-study reports from veteran assessment institutions seem to form enough of an empirical pattern to derive a typical nine-step CSAP development cycle:

1. An institution's administration - with or without external assessment mandate pressure and/or meaningful faculty input - commits to the establishment of a CSAP as a primary indicator of the institution's effectiveness.
2. A relatively latent "behind the scenes" period of information gathering, goal setting, planning, consensus-building, program design, resource-seeking and trial-and-error exploration of assessment models ensues.
3. Then a concerted CSAP effort begins, supplementing existing data-gathering activities with "pilot" assessments in selected programs across the campus.
4. Gradually the process effects of CSAP implementation are evidenced. Students, faculty, administrators, outside mandaters and others begin to be influenced by assessment activities (e.g., defining program objectives, finding and/or developing measures, piloting assessment strategies, analyzing preliminary evaluative feedback, preliminary reporting, etc.)
5. Assessment refinement eventually matches program objectives with effective measures at a manageable cost sufficiently to implement an institution-wide CSAP.
6. Finally product analysis of the CSAP begins to yield a definitive database on academic program quality, and the strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum, instruction, policies, and resources which are responsible for that level of quality.
7. Reactions to those results come from program faculty, institutional administrators, assessment mandaters, and others.

8. Changes in educational programs and/or policies and/or CSAPs are made to enhance the institution's effectiveness.
9. Those changes are, in turn, assessed,...and the higher education assessment cycle continues.

According to the results of this study, the majority of U.S. colleges and universities (59%) are at Step 1 or 2, just feeling their way into the assessment movement. Another 30% are somewhere between Steps 3 and 5, making a serious effort towards implementing a CSAP, but still wrestling with significant methodological, logistical, motivational and financial issues. A much smaller percentage - mostly those pioneering schools to whom those that follow owe such a debt of gratitude - are at Step 6 and beyond. And somewhere around 10% of American institutions either haven't gotten the word, are still trying to find a way around assessment, or are still at a pre-planning stage of CSAP implementation.

### **Some Unanswered Questions on the Future of the Higher Education Assessment Movement**

As we've stressed throughout this report, it is premature to be making confident long-term predictions. But in the short-term - i.e., the next few years - the expansion of current CSAPs and assessment mandates, and continued new institutional commitments to CSAPs, seem assured. Still, we must be cautious, since even for most institutions with state and/or regional accreditation mandates the first rounds of assessment reports, self-studies, and team visits have just recently gotten underway. Until the assessment-->report-->feedback loop has been closed, nothing is certain.

Many important process questions remain to be answered if assessment growth is to be sustained. For example, will increased roles for faculty and students be achieved? Will administrator resolve remain firm? Can the resources needed for quality assessment be found? Are assessment process benefits sufficient to sustain motivation? Are the necessary CSAP quality control safeguards in place to assure useful assessment results?

Soon more pressing assessment product questions will take center stage, and many of the answers will come from outside the institutions. How will state and accrediting mandaters react

to positive CSAP results?...to negative CSAP results? What will states or accreditors do if certain schools or programs refuse to implement CSAPs?...or do so in a perfunctory or clearly invalid manner? Will good programs and proficient faculty be rewarded? Will struggling but needed programs and overworked but underachieving faculty receive increased resources and support? Will unnecessary, inefficient, and unproductive programs suffer any meaningful sanctions? ..and what of poor faculty and unsuccessful administrators? What will happen to students who - because of CSAPs - show they haven't been learning what we've always thought they were learning? Will CSAPs produce higher achievement but at the expense of student retention?...or student body diversity?...or faculty research productivity?...or academic creativity?...or what?! CSAPs' future will, at the very least, be interesting.

Even broader issues and questions, which are beyond the scope of this survey, are perhaps equally likely to determine the longer term future of assessment in higher education as we move toward the 21st century. How substantial an effect, for example, will the current general economic downturn have on resources allocated to higher education? Will education in general and higher education in particular continue to be highly valued by state decision-makers and private funding sources? Will the trend toward an increased emphasis on the quality of education and teaching versus research continue to grow and be supported by higher education institutions? In other words, can the educational and economic climate necessary to sustain this movement toward increased effectiveness be expected to last long enough to achieve its goals?

Not one of these questions can be answered definitively at this time, nor should we expect to have sufficiently valid outcomes results from most institutions' CSAPs to draw informed conclusions for many years. Thus, as of 1990, the jury on the higher education assessment movement's long term future is still very much out.

### **Some Contingent Predictions**

In our view, the next two to five years will be crucial to the assessment movement, and thereby to a large extent, to the future course of higher education in this country. Assessment

clearly has the potential to be a major factor in upgrading quality, but there are many important conditions yet to be met. IF CSAPs are implemented widely, efficiently, and validly...and IF the results are utilized wisely for program improvement...and IF state agencies, accreditors, the media and the public deal fairly with assessment processes and products...THEN we are convinced that CSAPs will become such valued fixtures on college campuses that educators and students alike will wonder how we ever got along without them as long as we did.

On the other hand, the higher education assessment movement certainly has potential for abuse. IF administrators don't involve faculty and students in the forefront of CSAPs, little meaningful progress should be expected. IF assessors aren't highly selective and careful with their CSAP methods and procedures, accurate results will be few and far between. IF institutions and funding sources aren't supportive of quality CSAP requirements, a costly and demoralizing triumph of form over substance may well ensue. IF assessment mandaters don't demand valid CSAPs, and substantially reward good programs and sanction bad ones...or IF administrators, the government, and/or the

media turn our movement into a corruption of assessment (such has been the case with much of primary and secondary education's group test-based "assessment" programs)...THEN assessment runs the risk of becoming an academic and political debacle, with an anti-CSAP "baby-with-the-bathwater" counter-assessment movement not far behind.

Given the high degree of assessment planning and implementation occurring in our nation's colleges and universities, future surveys on assessment in higher education will likely find new perspectives, methods, processes, issues, and concerns. Given the high quality of educators we have working in assessment, new solutions to even the toughest questions will likely be forthcoming as well. This is entirely fitting, since assessment is, after all, a dynamic process of systematic self-examination intended to stimulate improvement.

We are dedicated to doing our part in support of conscientious higher educators and CSAP assessors everywhere to see that assessment fulfills its promise, and hope this report and the other results of our study to follow are significant contributions toward that end.

## DETAILED TABLES

**Table 1. Percentage of Institutions with Comprehensive Student Assessment Programs, (CSAP), by Type of Institution, 1990.**

	All Institutions (N=2,619)	Univer- sities (N=161)	Compre- hensives (N=408)	Bacca- laureates (N=739)	2-year Colleges (N=1,311)	Public Insti- tutions (N=1,428)	Indepen- dent Insti- tutions (N=1,191)
All institutions	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Institutions WITH comprehensive student assessment programs (CSAP)	30	26	28	28	33	32	28
Institutions WITHOUT comprehensive student assessment programs	70	74	72	72	67	68	72

**Table 2. Percentage of Institutions Citing Selected Reasons for the Establishment of Their Comprehensive Student Assessment Programs (CSAP)**

Reasons for Establishing	Percentage of Institutions (N=790)
All institutions with comprehensive student assessment programs (CSAP)	100%
1. Campus administration's decision	73
2. Accreditation standards	46
3. Faculty initiative	41
4. Following "national trends"	39
5. Following other institutions's examples	20
6. Higher education commission's regulations	19
7. State law	14
8. Outside consultant's recommendations	12
9. Governor's initiative	6
10. Other	13

**Table 3. Percentage of CSAP Institutions, by Selected Assessment Program Components and Type of Institution, 1990**

Assessment Program Component	All Institutions (N=790)	Universities (N=42)	Comprehensives (N=113)	Baccalaureates (N=206)	All 4 yr Institutions (N=361)	2-year Colleges (N=429)	Public Institutions (N=462)	Independent Institutions (N=328)
1. Basic college readiness skills	94	88	98	100	98	91	99	87
2. General education/liberal studies	67	75	76	74	74	61	64	73
3. Major field of study	63	75	91	58	70	57	57	71
4. Career preparation/alumni follow-up	76	94	80	77	80	72	69	86
5. Personal growth and development	65	81	75	65	70	61	57	77
6. Other	17	19	28	12	18	16	22	9

**Table 4. Percentage of CSAP Institutions That Assess Particular Objectives, by Method of Assessment**

Method of Assessment	Educational Objective Assessed					
	College Readi- ness	General Ed./ Liberal Arts	Major Field of Study	Career Prepara- tion	Student Personal Growth	Other
Institutions that include in their CSAP a component to assess the educational objective	94%	67%	63%	76%	65%	17%
Institutions that use as an assessment method -						
a. Commercial tests	82	39	27	15	29	7
b. Locally developed tests	51	19	39	11	19	7
c. Available archival records	27	14	17	16	10	4
d. Performance-based method	16	24	38	4	7	3
e. Student self-reporting	10	14	12	48	24	2
f. Other methods	3	3	8	9	2	3

Note: Multiple responses were permitted; detail should not be added.

**Table 5. Executive Responsibility for Comprehensive Student Assessment Programs (CSAP)**

Officer with Executive Responsibility	Percentage of Institutions (N=790)
1. Chief academic officer	38
2. Vice president for academic affairs	14
3. Dean of students	9
4. Director of institutional research	7
5. Dean of academic affairs	7
6. Chief executive officer	5
7. Vice president for student affairs	4
8. Other	14
9. No response	3

**Table 6. Day-to-day Operational Responsibility for Comprehensive Student Assessment Programs**

Officer with Operational Responsibility	Percentage of Institutions (N=790)
1. An administrator	62%
2. A faculty member	20
3. A faculty committee	10
4. Other	6
5. No response	3

**Table 7. Percentage of Institutions Reporting Faculty Participation in the Assessment Program, by Degree of Involvement**

TYPE OF PARTICIPATION Degree of Faculty Involvement	Percentage of Institutions (N=790)
1. PLANNING AND DESIGNING THE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM	
a. Heavily involved	45%
b. Moderately involved	25
c. Somewhat involved	25
d. Not at all involved	4
2. IMPLEMENTING/OPERATING THE PROGRAM	
a. Heavily involved	34%
b. Moderately involved	13
c. Somewhat involved	40
d. Not at all involved	12
3. EVALUATING THE PROGRAM	
a. Heavily involved	21%
b. Moderately involved	34
c. Somewhat involved	36
d. Not at all involved	9
4. DIRECTING THE PROGRAM	
a. Heavily involved	19%
b. Moderately involved	23
c. Somewhat involved	45
d. Not at all involved	13

Note: Detail may not sum to 100 because of rounding.



Table 8. Percentage Distribution of CSAP Leaders by Academic Discipline

Discipline	Primary Leader	Secondary Leader
1. Education	29%	19%
2. Social and behavioral sciences	24	18
3. Arts and humanities	21	11
4. Physical sciences, mathematics, engineering	7	12
5. Professional fields	3	4
6. Biological sciences	1	1
7. Other disciplines	4	6
8. No response	12	31

Note: Detail may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Table 9. Percentage Distribution of Institutions, by Degree to Which Selected Challenges Pose Problems for CSAPs

Degree or Problem	Challenge										
	Availability of valid Assessment Instruments	Student Motivation/participation	CSAP Coordination	Financial Support	Faculty Motivation/participation	Use of CSAP Results for Pgm. Enhancement	Valid Analysis of Results	Influence from Outside Agencies	Misuse of Results by Outside Agencies	Administrative Support	Misuse of Results by Media, Gov't., etc.
Any degree (slight to very severe)	79	79	77	75	70	69	67	40	25	25	20
Severe or very severe problem	19	14	13	20	11	11	8	9	4	3	2
No problem	19	14	20	22	27	21	29	50	55	68	58
No response	2	7	3	3	3	10	4	10	20	7	22



**Table 10. Percentage of Institutions That Identified Selected Problem Areas as "Most Severe"**

Problem Area	Percentage of Institutions (N=790)
1. Student motivation/participation	18%
2. Financial support	16
3. Faculty motivation/participation	15
4. Availability of assessment instruments	15
5. Use of results for program enhancement	13
6. Administrative support	7
7. Coordination of the assessment program	6
8. Analysis and interpretation of results	4
9. Influence from outside agencies	2
10. Misuse of results by media, government	2
11. Misuse of results by outside agencies, such as accrediting bodies, etc.	1
12. Other	6

Note: Respondents were asked to identify 2 of the 11 challenges as the "most severe." Some identified two; others, only one; over one-third did not identify any of the challenges as "most severe."

**Table 11. Percentage of Institutions Citing Beneficial Effects of a Comprehensive Student Assessment Program (CSAP)**

Beneficial Effect	Percentage of Institutions (N=790)
1. Academic planning enhanced	30%
2. Students' efforts, feedback enhanced	29
3. Standards upgraded; morale enhanced	8
4. Administration's awareness, involvement, cooperation enhanced	4
5. Faculty interaction, cooperation enhanced	3
6. Other	1
7. No response; too soon to respond	26

**Table 12. Percentage of Institutions Citing Detrimental Effects of a Comprehensive Student Assessment Program (CSAP)**

Detrimental Effect	Percentage of Institutions (N=790)
1. Extra work for faculty and administration	9%
2. Costs increased; resources reallocated	8
3. "Turf" problems	5
4. Drop in morale	4
5. Other	12
6. No detrimental effects	9
7. No. response; too soon to respond	53



Higher Education Panel Survey No. 79  
**Survey of Student Assessment Programs**

This questionnaire is designed to gather data regarding current efforts toward student assessment on campuses across the nation. At most institutions, comprehensive student assessment programs involve undergraduate students in the arts and sciences. Please complete this questionnaire for such a program *unless* your institution's program is directed to some other group of students. If the latter is the case, indicate here which students are involved in your assessment program.

The term, **student assessment**, as used in this survey refers to measuring student progress toward the institution's educational goals, (e.g., competencies derived from general education programs and major areas of study, basic skills remediation, career preparation) and related student-development goals, (e.g., personal and social values and behavior).

**SECTION I. PROGRAM STATUS**

1. Is your campus under a state mandate to implement an assessment program?

\_\_\_\_ No. \_\_\_\_ Yes. If yes, in which year did/does the mandate go into effect? 19\_\_\_\_

2. Does your campus have a currently operating comprehensive program to assess student learning and development?

\_\_\_\_ No. If no, go to item 3. \_\_\_\_ Yes. If yes, please go directly to item 4.

3. What is the status of planning for a comprehensive student assessment program on your campus?

\_\_\_\_ there are plans to implement an assessment program in or prior to Academic Year (AY) 1990-91.

\_\_\_\_ there are plans to implement a program in AY 1991-92 or later.

\_\_\_\_ a student assessment program is currently under discussion but a target date for implementation has not been set.

\_\_\_\_ the campus does not plan to implement a student assessment program. Please explain

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Respondents who answer this item (No. 3) need not answer any of the following questions. Please go directly to the end of the questionnaire, complete the respondent information block, and return the form.

Thank you for your assistance.

4. In which academic year was your student assessment program begun?

Academic year 19\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_

What were the principal reasons for establishing your student assessment program? Check all that apply in boxes to the left of the reason, and rank the three most important reasons by putting numbers 1, 2, and 3 in the blanks at the right for the first, second, and third most important reasons, respectively.

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accreditation standards                   | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> State law                                 | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Governor's initiative                     | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Higher education commission's regulations | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Campus administration's decision          | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outside consultants' recommendations      | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty initiative                        | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Following other institutions' examples    | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Following "national trends"               | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other; specify.                           | _____ |

5. For each of the program components listed (A through F), indicate which assessment methods are currently used. For each component, please circle the number(s) for all the methods in use. If a component is not included in your campus' assessment program, circle the "0" in the "None" column.

#### Assessment Methods

1. Commercially developed tests, e.g., ACT's CAAP, ETS' Academic Profile, etc.
2. Locally developed tests/exams.
3. Performance-based assessments, e.g., observations, simulations, demonstrations, practica.
4. Student self-report methods, e.g., interviews, ratings, surveys.
5. Available archival records, e.g., transcript evaluation, attainment rates, other records.
6. Other methods; please describe at the bottom of the page\*

Assessment Program Components	Assessment Method (Circle all that apply)						Other*
	None	Com'l. Tests	Local Tests	Performance	Self-report	Records	
A. Basic college-readiness skills (Measuring student progress in reading, writing, mathematics, etc.)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 *
B. General education/liberal studies (Measuring student progress in the humanities, natural sciences, social sciences, international studies, etc.)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 *
C. Major field of study (Measuring student progress in degree or program specialization, e.g. biology, early childhood education, music, pre-law, etc.)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 *
<u>For each method used, indicate the percentage of your departments that use that method.</u>							
		____%	____%	____%	____%	____%	____%
D. Career preparation/alumni follow-up (Measuring post-college adjustment, occupational success, graduate training, etc.)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 *
E. Student personal growth & development (Measuring values, attitudes, social development, and/or other nonacademic changes attributable to the college experience.)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 *
F. Other student outcomes, specify.		1	2	3	4	5	6 *
_____		1	2	3	4	5	6 *
_____		1	2	3	4	5	6 *

\*Other assessment methods, specify. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION II. PROGRAM PERSONNEL AND ORGANIZATION

6. Who has the primary executive responsibility for the student assessment program? Check only one.

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. President/chief executive officer
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. Vice president for \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. Chief academic officer
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. Dean of \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. Director of institutional research
- \_\_\_\_\_ f. Other; please specify. \_\_\_\_\_

7. Who is in charge of the day-to-day operation of the assessment program? Check only one.

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. An administrator; title: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. Faculty member(s); title: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. Faculty committee; name: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. Other; describe and give title/name \_\_\_\_\_

8. For the one or two most directly involved leaders of your campus' assessment program -

a. Indicate the academic discipline and highest earned degree.

Leader #1:

Discipline \_\_\_\_\_

Highest earned degree \_\_\_\_\_

Leader #2:

Discipline \_\_\_\_\_

Highest earned degree \_\_\_\_\_

b. From where were they chosen?

Leader #1    Leader #2

1. From within your institution \_\_\_\_\_

2. From another higher education institution \_\_\_\_\_

3. From a setting outside higher education. Please describe the settings for: \_\_\_\_\_

Leader #1 \_\_\_\_\_

Leader #2 \_\_\_\_\_

c. For each of the leaders, indicate their prior training and experience relevant to higher education student assessment. Check all that apply.

Leader #1    Leader #2

- |  |       |       |
|--|-------|-------|
| 1. Took a degree program with an emphasis in assessment or measurement | _____ | _____ |
| 2. Had a degree in education or higher education                       | _____ | _____ |
| 3. Had attended workshops and/or seminars or conferences on assessment | _____ | _____ |
| 4. Had experience in assessment as applied to academic discipline(s)   | _____ | _____ |
| 5. Had experience in assessment at the institutional level             | _____ | _____ |
| 6. Had other relevant experience; specify.                             | _____ | _____ |
| _____  |       |       |
| _____  |       |       |
| 7. Had no prior experience with assessment programs                    | _____ | _____ |

9. Do you have an "Office of Student Assessment" or similar coordinating center for student assessment efforts on your campus?

- a. ☐ No. ☐ Yes. If yes, what is the exact name of that office?  
If no, go to question 10.

c. How is the office staffed? Indicate the number of each type of staff in full-time-equivalents (FTEs). Categorize individuals by their institutional classification, not by the type of work they are doing for the assessment program. For example, if a graduate student is performing clerical duties, count him/her as a graduate student; or if an English instructor is helping to administer the program, classify him/her as a faculty member.

- |                          |           |                                |           |
|--------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------|-----------|
| (1) Administrators       | _____ FTE | (4) Graduate/student assistant | _____ FTE |
| (2) Faculty              | _____ FTE | (5) Other; specify             | _____ FTE |
| (3) Secretarial/clerical | _____ FTE |                                | _____ FTE |

d. What assessment functions does the office perform? Check all that apply.

- |  |       |                               |       |
|--|-------|-------------------------------|-------|
| (1) Planning                             | _____ | (9) Consultation with faculty | _____ |
| (2) Coordination                         | _____ | (10) Liaison with students    | _____ |
| (3) Budgeting                            | _____ | (11) Line authority over -    | _____ |
| (4) "Hands on" assessment implementation | _____ |                               |       |
| (5) Technical assistance                 | _____ |                               |       |
| (6) Research and development             | _____ | (12) Other; specify.          | _____ |
| (7) Program evaluation                   | _____ |                               |       |
| (8) Consultation with administration     | _____ |                               |       |

10. What other organizational structure(s) are directly involved in the planning, evaluation, or advisory activities of your student assessment program? Check all that apply and indicate the specific name of the office, committee, or group involved.

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Administrator groups; name \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. Faculty committee/council; name \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. Student committee/council; name \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. Consultants; specify fields \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. Other; specify \_\_\_\_\_

11. Is your institution part of an assessment consortium?

- \_\_\_\_\_ No. ☐ Yes. If yes, name it and indicate the number and type of members.

12. Circle the number that corresponds most closely to the degree to which faculty were/are involved in --

	Heavily Involved	Moderately Involved	Somewhat Involved	Slightly Involved	Not at all Involved
a. Planning & designing the assessment program	5	4	3	2	1
b. Directing the assessment program	5	4	3	2	1
c. Implementing/operating the assessment program	5	4	3	2	1
d. Evaluating the assessment program	5	4	3	2	1

### SECTION III. EVALUATION OF THE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

13. Below are a number of the challenges faced in the implementation of a successful student assessment program. Indicate the degree to which each has been a problem in the development of your program by circling the appropriate number.

Challenge	No Problem	Slight Problem	Moderate Problem	Severe Problem	Very Severe Problem	Not Applic.
a. Financial support	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Administrative support	1	2	3	4	5	6
c. Faculty motivation/participation	1	2	3	4	5	6
d. Student motivation/participation	1	2	3	4	5	6
e. Influence from outside agencies, regulations, mandates, etc.	1	2	3	4	5	6
f. Coordination of all aspects of the assessment program	1	2	3	4	5	6
g. Availability of valid assessment instruments and methods	1	2	3	4	5	6
h. Analysis and interpretation of assessment results	1	2	3	4	5	6
i. Use of assessment results for program enhancement	1	2	3	4	5	6
j. Misuse/misinterpretation of results by outside agencies, accrediting or regulatory bodies	1	2	3	4	5	6
k. Misuse/misinterpretation of results by media, governmental bodies, public, etc.	1	2	3	4	5	6
l. Other challenges; specify.	1	2	3	4	5	6
_____	1	2	3	4	5	6
_____	1	2	3	4	5	6
_____	1	2	3	4	5	6

14. For the most severe challenges noted in question 13, list the approaches your institution used in meeting them, and indicate whether each approach was particularly successful or unsuccessful.

Challenge: _____	The approach was	
Approaches used to meet the challenge.	success ful	not suc- cessful
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Challenge: _____	The approach was	
Approaches used to meet the challenge.	success ful	not suc- cessful
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

15. What effects has your assessment program had on the effectiveness of your institution's educational program thus far?

Main beneficial effects	Main detrimental effects
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

16. What are your institution's three greatest unmet needs in implementing a successful student assessment program and using the results to enhance your educational program?

a. Greatest need.

---

---

b. Second greatest need.

---

---

c. Third greatest need.

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17. What do you consider to be the two most helpful decisions or actions that were made in setting up your assessment program?

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18. How would you rate the quality of the student assessment program on your campus?

☐ a. Excellent

☐ b. Very good

☐ c. Good

☐ d. Fair

☐ e. Poor

☐ f. Very poor

☐ g. No basis to judge

Please use the remaining space for any comments, clarifications, or explanations that would help us get an accurate picture of your student assessment program.

---

Thank you for your assistance.

Please return the questionnaire in the attached postage-paid preaddressed envelope, and mail it by December 22, 1989 to:

Higher Education Panel  
American Council on Education  
One Dupont Circle  
Washington, DC 20036

Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Name of Respondent \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX B TECHNICAL NOTE

The Higher Education Panel (HEP) forms the basis of an ongoing survey research program created in 1971 by the American Council on Education. Its purpose is to conduct specialized surveys on topics of current policy interest to the higher education community.

The Panel is a disproportionate stratified sample numbering 1,040 colleges and universities, divided into two half-panels of 520 institutions each. The sample was drawn from the more than 3,200 colleges and universities listed in the *Education Directory, Colleges and Universities* published by the U. S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The Panel's stratification design is based primarily upon institution type, control, and size. For any given survey, either the entire Panel, half-panel or an appropriate sub-group is used.

The survey mechanism relies on a network of campus representatives at institutions whose presidents have agreed to participate. The representatives receive the Panel questionnaires and direct them to the most appropriate campus official for response.

The sample for this study consisted of 455 institutions. Removed from one of the half-panels were graduate-only institutions along with all of the "specialized" institutions, i.e., separately organized colleges of medicine, religion, law, business, health sciences, fine arts, etc.

Questionnaires were mailed to each member of the half-panel in early November 1989. A follow-up mailing was sent in January 1990, and extensive follow-up telephone calls were made in the period March-May 1990.

Table B-1. Stratification Design

Cell	Type of Institution	Enrollment	Population	Respondents
	All institutions		2,619	357
1	Large public doctorate-granting	a	103	39
2	Large private doctorate-granting	a	58	23
3	Large public comprehensive	a	92	34
4	Large private comprehensive	a	26	10
7	Large public 2-year	a	43	13
8	Public comprehensive	5,500-8,999	56	16
9	Public comprehensive	< 5,500	108	19
10	Private comprehensive	<9,000	126	20
11	Public baccalaureate	<9,000	127	17
12	Private baccalaureate	1,350-8,999	166	20
13	Private baccalaureate	<1,350	446	28
17	Public 2-yr. academic/comprehensive	6,000-8,999	55	13
18	Public 2-yr. academic/comprehensive	4,000-5,999	72	13
19	Public 2-yr. academic/comprehensive	2,000-3,999	155	22
20	Public 2-yr. academic/comprehensive	<2,000	333	21
21	Private 2-yr. acad./comprehensive	<9,000	129	10
22	Public 2-year occupational	2,500-8,999	63	14
23	Public 2-year occupational	<2,500	221	19
24	Private 2-year occupational	<9,000	240	6

a. Institutions that meet one or more of the three following criteria: (1) total full-time equivalent (FTE) 1981 enrollment greater than 8,999; (2) graduate FTE 1981 enrollment greater than 749; (3) FY 1979 educational and general expenditures of \$35 million or more.

These efforts netted usable questionnaires from 357 half-panel members by the end of May 1990, resulting in an overall response rate of 78 percent.

Data from the responding institutions were weighted and adjusted for item and institutional nonresponse within each of the cells in the stratification design shown in Table B-1. These procedures provided estimates representative of the national population of 2,619

universities, 4-year colleges, and 2-year colleges (the 3,200 institutional universe minus graduate only and "specialized" institutions).

Table B-2 compares survey respondents and nonrespondents on several variables. Response rates were greater than average at comprehensive institutions. They were below average at independent baccalaureate and two-year colleges.

Table B-2. Comparison of Respondents and Nonrespondents to the Survey Questionnaire, by Control and Type of Institution

Control and Type of Institution	Respondents (N=357)	Non- respondents (N=98)	Response Rate
Total	100.0	100.0	78.5
Control			
Public	67.2	61.2	90.0
Independent	32.8	38.8	75.5
Control and Type of Institution			
Public university	10.9	11.2	78.9
Independent university	6.4	6.1	79.3
Public comprehensive univ. or college	19.3	16.3	81.2
Independent comprehensive univ. or coll.	8.4	7.1	81.1
Public baccalaureate college	4.8	5.1	77.3
Independent college	13.4	16.3	75.0
Public two-year college	32.2	28.6	80.4
Independent two-year college	4.5	9.2	64.0

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